

JOY AND FEAR IN VALENCIENNES

Hungry and Gaunt, Inhabitants Quietly Welcome Allies

STORIES OF CAPTIVITY

Germans Looted City of Many Valuables—People Hit for Days

By PHILIP GIBBS

Special Cable to Evening Public Ledger

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With the British Army, Nov. 4.

After fierce fighting by English and Canadian troops, the old city of Valenciennes, across the Scheldt canal, was entered Saturday morning. At 7:30 a.m., the general commanding the Canadian troops which encircled the town sent this historic message:

"I have the honor to report that Valenciennes is completely in our hands."

From the north all advance was made impossible by the opening of the Scheldt sluice gates, which flooded that side of the city, and the enemy's only way of getting in was to cross over, where he had concentrated all his available men. They fought with great courage and obstinacy, but it was unavailing, especially as the Canadians and English, supported by an overwhelming concentration of fire, made rapid headway.

Many Germans fled across the little Rhonne River, and 4000 prisoners were taken by the combined forces. The enemy's counter-attacks were made with the help of tanks, but they broke down utterly, so that the British captured tanks and many more prisoners.

Haunting Pictures of War

The way to Valenciennes from Douai was full of haunting pictures of the war, because Canadian and English troops fought through many of the villages along these roads, and those places have not escaped unscathed.

The people have fled from those nearest to Valenciennes because of the German shells which smashed through their roofs and walls and made wrecks in many houses. Some of them have been sliced in half, so that one looks into rooms where cottage pianos and women's sewing machines and beds stand still, stuck against the farthest walls amid broken beams and plaster.

Only a few soldiers move among these abandoned villages, and Saturday, when a foul day with the wet mist again drove them through shell-pierced walls, which stank like sounding boards to the roar of gunfire, they smelled of tragedy. Through Origny and Audry to La Sentinelle, suburbs of Valenciennes on this side of the Scheldt, there was hardly a living soul, except old folk like shadows in the sun, or lurking under the walls. British soldiers, no one could tell by the shape of their steel hats.

All along the railway from Douai to Arras, the tracks had been blown up by the enemy, and a mottled wreath of smoke across the line. Beyond, in this thick veil of mist, black stag moths like shadows in the sun, or lurking under the walls. British soldiers, no one could tell by the shape of their steel hats.

Dead horses, horribly mangy, lay at the roadside. The war had passed this way not long ago. It was still very raw. Valenciennes and that city was between two fires. Most of the fire came from one side. The guns were crowded in this fire, through which their flashes stabilized with sudden gusts of flames.

When we came to the Scheldt canal and bridge, the smoke spread out before us on the other side, a long narrow city, built along the line of the Scheldt, so that one sees it from end to end, with its churches and factories and towers high above its crowded roofs.

People Remain Hidden

But where were the people of Valenciennes? The solitude was beginning to be oppressive. This was not like the entry into Lille. There were no manifestations of joy in this liberated city.

The tiny of each street had kept the houses hidden in their houses.

Presently here and there I saw some faces peering out and then a door opened and a man and woman and their thin children appeared. The woman thrust out a skinny hand, grasped mine and began to weep. Then she talked passionately, with a strange mingling of rage and grief.

"My God!" she said. "These devils have gone at last! What have they not made us suffer!"

Her husband spoke to me over his wife's shoulder.

"Sir," he said, "they have stolen everything, burnt everything, and have bandits and brigands."

"We are hungry," said a thin girl, and a smaller boy at her side, with a pinched white face. "We have eaten all our bread, and I am hungry."

They had some coffee and asked me to go inside and drink it with them, but I could not wait.

The woman held my wrists tight, in her thin fingers.

"We are grateful to the English soldiers. It is they who have saved us."

Further on in Valenciennes two ladies passed, well-dressed in black. They were hurrying fast, as though afraid of all the grim sights over their heads, but they did not stop to look back. We were full of joy, British, the English."

"One of them put her hand to her heart in a breathless way and said: "For four years we have suffered. It would take four years to tell you all we have suffered." Mon dieu!" Mon dieu!"

No Houses in Ruins

A group of men stood in a stiff street at the end of the town hall, and by the old gates at that end I saw them follow the momentum of the crowd, men in black clothing and dignitaries of the city. They bowed and shook hands very warmly and each man started to tell the tale of Valenciennes under German rule, and of the last days of terror, and they all spoke at once so that it was difficult to hear, especially as the noise of gunfire was increased in violence.

I saw a soldier who had been allowed to return, as they were too weak to continue the march and dropped out, cumbering the line of the German retreat. There were also others who had escaped.

They clamored for news of the outcome.

"What is the line?" they asked. "What have we gained?" And when I told them they raised their hats and cheered, for one man was from Lille and another from Guise, and another from Compiègne and had no news.

The Mayor's secretary told me some of the facts of the German occupation. It is still here, he said, that a German flag on the roof of the post office, at an altitude of 100 feet, was, at that you, Canadian officer had climbed up and fastened the French tricolor in its place, and after that two French interpreters with a Canadian brigade, the first to enter, had raised the British flag in Valenciennes.

I asked for the Mayor of the city, and a man who had been standing under cover of a wall said, "I will take you if you will please wait a minute."

No Water to Fight Fire

I had less than a minute to wait before he appeared again in full uniform and said:

"I am the pomper (fireman) of Valenciennes. There were many fires last

night in the city,

but we can do nothing

because the Germans cut off all the water from the pipes, so that the cellars are flooded, and the poor people cannot escape from the bombardment."

I saw this misery in Valenciennes and waded through water ankle deep in the streets and looked down in the cellars through open doors below the houses and saw that they were deep in water. Some young men came up to me, shaking hands emotionally, with tears in their eyes.

"We are some of those who escaped," said one of them.

"Escaped from what?" I asked, and they pointed to a poster on the wall. I read it, and saw it was an order for the mobilization of all men between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five who were not in the reserves, to report to their commandant under severe penalties for refusal, in order to be synchronized with the German lines. This order was dated October 21, and the mobilization was to take place on November 1, the day before our capture of the city. Twenty thousand people had been forcibly ex-patriated, and were marched direction of Avesnes, leaving only men, who were employed by the enemy in the munition service, maintaining fire and water supplies, washing and other work.

Holiday in Wardrobe

Among the remaining inhabitants were many who after the explosion on October 21 had been allowed to return, as they were too weak to continue the march and dropped out, cumbering the line of the German retreat. There were also others who had escaped.

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IL TRICOLORE ISSATO SU TRENTO E TRIESTE

La Gloriosa Bandiera Svento-
la Sulla Torre di
San Giusto

Published and distributed Under
permit No. 10, on site of the Postoffice of Philadel-
phia, Pa.
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Trento, 1 November.

Le città di Trento e Trieste sono le

possesso degli italiani da ieri sera

Trento è la principale città fortificata

del Tirolo e Trieste il principale porto

dell'Austria sull'Adriatico.

Il sogno recente dell'occupazione

italiana si è fatto realtà.

Marziali e soldati sbucano ieri nel

città di Trieste, mentre umanità in

valle di Val Sugana e raggiungeva ed

occupava Trento.

L'occupazione delle capitali delle due

provincie restante rappresenta il

grandioso colpo della guerra italiana

sull'Austria, la quale ha

deciso invadere la testa ed aspettare le

condizioni imposte dall'Italia nell'arbitrio

improvviso.

Solo l'arrivo, che andrà in vigore

alle 3 di oggi, ha potuto salvare le

truppe austriache dall'assoluto

disfatto.

Sopra una fronte di 180 miglia, dal

Trento al mare il terreno, dai monti

grigi scuri e riconosciuto da un tappeto

di cadaveri nemichi.

La Prima Armata, che è stata quella

che è entrata in Trento, cattura in

numerosi prigionieri ed un immenso

botino. Reggimenti austriaci si arres-

cono da tutte le parti.

I marziali italiani sbucano a Trieste

immediatamente insieme la bandiera italiana sul vecchio castello di Trieste e sulla Torre di San Giusto.

Nelle strade vicine le forze militari

riconquistano il Tagliamento e pos-

sono adi di là di esso occupando Udine

e Pordenone.

Significativa vittoria, non

minore, composta di 100 mila

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